

THE COLLECTOR'S TASK

THE Collector's Superior Officer had announced that the library was 'like a pig-stye,' and had coupled with the declaration a request that it should be made 'fit for a Christian' to enter.

The Collector replied to the effect that the feminine mind was not attuned to accurate description, and added in facetious vein that if she would tell him where the pigstyes were situated that were littered with such rare musical volumes he would enter them in a burglarious manner.

The Superior Officer had shown her superiority by declining to answer such a quibble, and had left the room.

The Collector sighed, for his house had grown too small for the litter, but making a manly effort, on his knees and on a step-ladder, attempted to restore order among his unruly treasures.

He was tempted from the step-ladder to rest in his arm-chair, hugging to himself half-a-dozen 'Playfords.' There were some 'Dancing Masters' in the corner there - not the very earliest editions, it is true, but still with seventeenth-century ones among them.

But the small folios he had with him in his present possession, and he idly turned over the mellow, cream-coloured leaves. There was that, for example, which he remembered so well buying in St. Martin's Lane in the dim ages of his collecting, when he scarcely realized his good fortune in obtaining it. He read its title:--

Ayres and Dialogues for one, two, and three voyces, by Henry Lawes, servant to his majestie. The First booke. London: Printed by T. H. for John Playford, and are to be sold at his shop in the Middle Temple, near the Church Door, 1653.

He turned the title-page over, read the dedication to the two lady pupils, and saw from the manly tone of it, and the preface, that Henry Lawes was not ashamed or afraid to proclaim in those Roundhead days that he gloried in his service to the late king. His brother William had gone off to the wars to fight for Charles, and had died at the siege of Chester. The Collector could be quite sure it was circumstance and not cowardice that kept Henry, the younger brother, back.

The opening - 'To all understanders or lovers of Musick' - is delightful reading, and lets a flood of light upon the publishing methods of the seventeenth century.

'It is easie,' says Lawes, 'to say I have been much importun'd by persons of Quality to publish my compositions. But, though I could plead it (and without vain pretensions), yet now I shall waive it. Nor was I drawn to it by any little thought of private gain; though men of my relations (as the world now goes) are justly presum'd not to overflow, and perhaps the matter will not reach that value. Let the stationer look to that, who himself hath undergone the charge and trouble of the whole impression, who yet (by his favour) hath lately made bold to print in one book above twenty of my songs, whereof I had no knowledge till his book was in the press. And it seems he found those so acceptable that he is ready for more. Therefore, now the question is not whether or no my compositions shall be publick, but whether they shall come forth from me or from some other hand, and which of the two is like to afford the true correct copies I leave others to judge ... I could tell ye also I have often found many of mine that have walked abroad in other men's names...

only I shall say that some who had so adopted and owned my songs had greater kindnesse for the children than for the father; else sure they had not bestowed some other late Ayres (which themselves could not own) upon Forrainers and Strangers because I composed them to Italian and Spanish words ... But wise men of our generation are so giddy that whatsoever is native (be it never so excellent) must lose its taste, because themselves have lost theirs.'

'True, true, Master Henry Lawes,' said the Collector, putting down the volume. 'Things have not mended one atom since your day. We had a brief struggle to found an English school with the other

Henry at its head, but Handel and the fates were against it. We send our music students to Germany, and in England teach on German lines, and we take unto our souls music that has emanated from a different national "temperament," and think, or are taught to think, that we have no "temperament" of our own, but must be parasites upon some other nation's.

'Well, well, so the world wags,' thought the Collector, as he reached for another Playford. 'And by the way,' he continued, 'the music composer's trade in those days was as bad as now, for does not Mr. Lawes say that he expects to get nothing for his labour until "honest John Playford," who provides paper and labour, be paid? And does not Mr. Lawes also refer to John's publication of the date 1652, which bears this title -

Select Musical Ayres and Dialogues for one and two voyes ... composed by John Wilson [and] Charles Colman, Doctors of Musick, [and] Henry Lawes [and] William Webb, gentlemen.

'If I remember rightly the copy I consulted in the Bodleian gave the songs and airs, but had not the grace to add the composers' names to them individually. The second book has not this fault, for each piece is headed with the musician's name.'

The Collector's hand lighted on another small folio:

Comes Amoris, or the companion of Love. Being a choice collection of the newest songs ... The first book ... Printed by Nat Thompson for John Carr and Sam Scott . . . 1687.

The Collector chuckled as he turned to the first page. 'What if Messrs. Boosey or Chappell were to give such an advertisement as the publisher of this book here places before his readers?'

The Collector read out the lines on page one, remembering that this leaf is missing from the British Museum copy:

A CATCH BY WAY OF EPISTLE, SETT by Mr. HENRY PURCELL.

*To all lovers of musick, performers and scrapers,
To those that love catches, play-tunes, and cut capers,
With a new catch I greet you, and though I say it that should'n,
Like a fiddle the musick, though the words are but wooden,
But my brother John Playford and I shall present you,
Ere long, with a book I presume will content you.
'Tis true we know well the sale of good musick,
But to hear us perform would make him sick, or you sick,
My maggott-man Sam, at the first Temple gate,
Will further inform you, if not my wife Kate,
From between the two Divels near Temple Bar,
I rest your friend, and servant, John Carr.*

The Collector realized that John Playford's shop was in the Inner Temple 'near the church door,' while John Carr's was nearer the Strand and Fleet Street, at the Middle Temple gate.

The mysterious sentence 'between the two divels' he knew indicated that the shop was between the two taverns, each of which bore the sign 'The Devil.' The first, near Middle Temple gate, had the sign of St. Dunstan pulling the Devil's nose (it was opposite St. Dunstan's Church), and the newer, or 'Little Devil,' was further on, in Fleet Street. 'My maggott-man Sam' is obviously Sam Scott, his partner; and speaking of John Playford as his 'brother' raises the question whether Playford and John Carr were brothers-in-law, or only brothers in trade; they were certainly not rivals in business. John Playford died late in 1686, or in the following year, 1687, which is the date printed on *Comes Amoris*.

It must be remembered that Playford (and no doubt Carr) generally, if not always, dated his publications for the year in advance of the real year of issue. So we may take it that the work really belongs to the year 1686.

The Collector turned this matter over in his mind, and was reminded of another 'Catch,' that stood in place of an advertisement.

He got up from his chair, and took from its proper shelf an oblong quarto, still wearing its original brown calfskin. Its title ran:

The Pleasant Musical Companion. Being a Choice Collection of Catches for three and four voices.... The sixth edition. London: Printed by William Pearson, and sold by John Young, Musical Instrument Maker, at the Dolphin and Crown, at the West End of St. Paul's Church, London, 1720.

On page 89 he finds 'A Catch upon Mr. Young and his son.' It is for four voices, and the name 'Dr. Caesar' is attached as composer:

You scrapers that want a good fiddle well strung,
You must go to the man that is old while he's Young;
But if this same fiddle you fain would play bold
You must go to his son, who'll be Young when he's old.
There's old Young and young Young, both men of renown,
Old sells, and young plays, the best fiddle in town,
Young and old live together, and may they live long,
Young to play an old fiddle, old to sell a new song.

'That is neat and witty,' thought the Collector. 'John Young published many pretty books. I have come across a number in advertisements, of which no copy now appears to exist; and Talbot Young, his son, Hawkins tells us, while quoting the 'Catch' (with a different date), established with Dr. Maurice Greene and some others a musical society over his father's shop, which society afterwards developed into importance.'

The Collector's reverie was here interrupted by the entrance of his Superior Officer.

'Well,' she pointedly remarked, glancing at the still littered tables and chairs, 'nearly done?'

'I'm afraid I haven't, my dear. I think I've been rather lazy; but don't fret, I'll tackle the job to-morrow.'

FRANK KIDSON.